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RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 1348
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0326
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KINSHASA ALSO FOR BRAZZAVILLE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [GB](#) [KDEM](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION PARTIES DECLINE TO JOIN NEW GOVERNMENT

REF: LIBREVILLE 0001

Classified By: Ambassador Barrie Walkley for reason 1.4 b and d

¶1. (U) In December's legislative elections, Gabon's ruling party -- the PDG -- won 83 out of 120 seats in the National Assembly; allied parties expected to support the government picked up 16 seats. In addition, 4 individuals running as independents (without any party affiliation) won seats. Opposition parties won 17 seats.

¶2. (C) It was anticipated that a new government would be announced during the first week of January -- and that included in the cabinet would be figures from the opposition and from civil society. (President Omar Bongo over the years has had a strategy of "embracing" or buying off the opposition as a means of taming political opponents.) However, there has been no new government yet announced -- apparently because the opposition parties this time are rejecting all offers of cabinet positions.

¶3. (C) Prime Minister Jean Eyeghe Ndong approached the leaders of the two principal opposition parties earlier last week, hoping to be able to convince them to accept cabinet positions. Both Pierre Mamboundou (of the UPG) and Zachary Myboto (of the UGDD) declined the offer. On Friday, Bongo himself tried, with the same results. Mamboundou and Myboto told Bongo that they were following the logic that "the majority party should govern and the opposition should oppose." So far, the other opposition parties (the PGP, the CDJ, the RNB and the FAR) are adopting the same line. All of the opposition parties, however, are committed to occupying their seats in the National Assembly.

¶4. (U) The new National Assembly is to be sworn-in on January ¶24. By custom, Gabon's prime minister and members of the new cabinet are announced before the National Assembly is sworn-in.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Mamboundou boycotted the 2001 legislative elections and has long proclaimed his independence from Bongo. His declining the offer of a cabinet position is a means of continuing that independence and maintaining his credentials as chief of the opposition. NOTE: Those sentiments have not totally prevented him from accepting Bongo's assistance: After police in 2006 raided his house/party HQ, Mamboundou found refuge in the South African embassy for months -- until Bongo met him (and provided him a luxury suite at the Meridien hotel). Mamboundou later quietly accepted a villa from Bongo (Mamboundou strenuously

insists that there has been no compromise of principle here, asserting that the villa is compensation for the damage security forces inflicted on his old compound). As Mamboundou sees it, in this case he made Bongo pay for an extra-legal action.

WALKLEY